

Chapter 21

Travel

ARS employees, when directed by the appropriate official, may travel and incur necessary travel expenses to carry out authorized ARS programs. Travel may also be authorized for new hires and relocation. Employees will be reimbursed within limits prescribed by the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) and Agricultural Travel Regulations (ATR).

TRAVEL VOUCHERS (WITH ORIGINAL RECEIPTS) / AUTHORIZATIONS MUST BE RETAINED FOR SIX (6) YEARS.

Acronyms: See [Chapter 22](#) for a comprehensive list of commonly used acronyms.

References: [P&P 340.0](#) Delegations of Authority to Approve Travel (ARS)
[P&P 341.2](#) Acceptance of Travel Funds from Non-Federal Sources
[P&P 342.1](#) Per Diem and Actual Subsistence Allowances
[P&P 342.3](#) Travel Advances
[P&P 343.1](#) Approval of Premium Class Air Travel
[P&P 343.3](#) Procurement of Passenger Transportation
[P&P 343.4](#) Contract Air Service
[P&P 343.6](#) Use of United States Flag Air Carriers for Foreign Travel
[P&P 344.2](#) Foreign Travel Plan
[P&P 345.1](#) Foreign Travel Itineraries
[P&P 345.3](#) Passports, Visas, and Security Clearances for Foreign Travel
[P&P 350.10](#) Approving Funds to Non-Federal Organizations for Support of Scientific Meetings (Section D.3 deals w/travel)
[P&P 412.5](#) Recruitment and Retention Incentives and Other Special Pay (Section 6, 7, and 8 deal with Relocation Expense issues)

NPA Policy Memorandums:

[NPA-PM-07-001](#) Meals, Food or Refreshments at Agency or Non-Agency Events

[NPA-PM-05-007](#) Paying Registration Fees, which Include Lodging

Bulletins:

[00-302](#) Reimbursement for Taxes on Lodging Obtained in OCONUS (non-foreign) Locations

[00-304](#) Conference Planning

[00-305](#) Acceptance of Travel Expenses from Non-Federal Sources

[02-302](#) Frequent Traveler Benefits and Other Promotional Benefits

[02-303](#) Vendor Coding for FFIS Travel and Other Payments (Cancels 01-310)

[02-309](#) Foreign Travel Procedures Reminder

[02-315](#) Official Telephone Calls

<u>05-304</u>	Procedures for Arranging Leisure Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel
<u>05-312</u>	Use of Restricted Fares
<u>06-402.3.1</u>	Travel Between Home and a Temporary Duty Station
<u>07-301</u>	Use and Management of the Government Travel Charge Card
<u>07-306</u>	Paying for Travel Expenses
<u>07-308</u>	Limited Open Authorizations
<u>08-301</u>	GovTrip Transition
<u>08-303</u>	Travel Payments in GovTrip
<u>08-305</u>	Restricted Fares for FY2009 Travel
<u>09-304</u>	Official Travel File and Receipt Requirement
<u>09-305</u>	Local Travel Policy
<u>09-308</u>	Temporary Suspension of Split Pay In Gov-Trip
<u>10-304</u>	Change to Privately Owned Vehicle Reimbursement Rate
<u>10-305</u>	FY2010 Travel Training
<u>10-306</u>	Use of the Foreign Travel Information System (FTIS)

References: GovTrip (eTravel for Government) USDA Document Processing Manual
http://www.govtrip.com/govtrip/GTdocs/USDA_DP_Manual.pdf
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Travelers Health
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

Cross References: [Chapter 7](#) Ethics
[Chapter 10](#) Human Resources
[Chapter 14](#) Property for guidance regarding GOV's
[Chapter 16](#) Agricultural Research Information System (ARIS). . . FTIS
[Chapter 20](#) Time and Attendance/Leave

Web Sites: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Traveler's Health
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>
Contract City Pairs
<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/27228>
Exchange Rates
<http://www.x-rates.com/cgi-bin/hlookup.cgi>
Travel Resources
<http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/home.do?tabId=0>
Federal Travel Regulations (FTR)
http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentId=14161&contentType=GSA_OVERVIEW
GovTrip
www.govtrip.com
GovTrip Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/travel/GovTrip/index.htm>
OAG's Hotels at Per Diem Rates
<http://www.hotelsatperdiem.com>
OAG Official Traveler - Links to Government Travel Sites
<http://gov.oag.com/links.asp>
Per Diem Rates (most up-to-date rates)
<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877>
REE Administrative Issuances Homepage
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/pplist.htm>
Traveler's Health webpage
[http://](http://arsnet.usda.gov/HSS/index.htm) <http://arsnet.usda.gov/HSS/index.htm/www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

SharePoint Site (login required):

Examples and current NPA information available at:
<https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/NPA/budget/default.aspx>

Forms

[Acceptance of Payment](#) from a Non-Federal Source for Travel Expenses (password required for SharePoint)

[Name Supplement File](#) Form (need password)

Points of Contact:

Area Contacts	Headquarters Contacts
<p>Linda Sundstrom Area Transportation Assistant USDA-ARS-NPA Natural Resources Research Center 2150 Centre Ave., Bldg. D, Suite 310 Fort Collins, CO 80526-8119 Phone: (970) 492-7026 Fax: (970) 492-7036 E-Mail: linda.sundstrom@ars.usda.gov</p>	<p>Diane Eggert Travel and Relocation Services Branch USDA-ARS-AFM-FMD-T&RSB 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Rm 3-2178 Beltsville, MD 20705-5114 Phone: (301) 504-1260 Fax: (301) 504-1302 E-Mail: diane.eggert@ars.usda.gov</p>
<p>Lisa Mullenax Area Budget & Fiscal Officer USDA-ARS-NPA Natural Resources Research Center 2150 Centre Ave., Bldg. D, Suite 310 Fort Collins, CO 80526-8119 Phone: (970) 492-7010 Fax: (970) 492-7010 E-Mail: lisa.mullenax@ars.usda.gov</p>	

OFFICIAL TRAVEL THAT IS REIMBURSABLE

A Travel Authorization must be prepared in Gov.Trip for all travel with estimated costs of travel, lodging, M&IE, and other allowable costs such as supplies, taxis, registration, phone calls, etc. A Travel Voucher is completed in Gov.Trip after travel to initiate reimbursement. Explanations of the items required to complete the Authorization and Voucher are provided below and on the following pages.

LODGING, MEALS and INCIDENTAL EXPENSES

Per Diem Allowance (PD): A daily payment for subsistence expenses of the actual cost of lodging, and a set amount for meals and incidental expenses.

Allowable CONUS Per Diem Amounts: Standard rate: \$123 (actual cost of lodging not to exceed [NTE] \$77 + Meals and Incidental Expenses [M&IE] \$46). Lodging and M&IE rates vary depending on locality. If the rate for a particular location is not noted on the locality per diem listing, the standard rate applies. The Gov.Trip system will not accept a locality rate that is incorrect. All travel vouchers must be approved by the traveler's supervisor/fundholder. When the supervisor is absent, the official designated as 'Acting' may approve the travel voucher, otherwise, this authority cannot be delegated.

Actual Subsistence Expense (ASE): The maximum amount of reimbursement for actual subsistence expenses that may be authorized or approved for each calendar day or fraction thereof shall not exceed 150% of the applicable maximum per diem rate as shown in Appendix A, Chapter 301, FTR, or the most current per diem rates can be found on the internet at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>
Steve Helmrich is the approving official of ASE. A letter of request must be submitted through the Transportation Assistant/Area Director requesting any actual lodging expense prior to travel. Receipts are required for all lodging and all other expenses over \$35.

M&IE (Meals and Incidental Expenses) Allowances: Per diem allowable for the day travel begins shall be three-fourths of the applicable M&IE rate prescribed for the lodging location. Per diem allowable for the day travel ends shall be three-fourths of the M&IE rate applicable to the preceding calendar day.

NOTE: Time of departure and return is no longer required to be listed on the voucher.

Per Diem for travel more than 12 hours but not exceeding 24 hours is calculated as follows: lodging not required; three-fourths of the applicable M&IE allowance for the temporary duty assignment location. If more than one temporary duty point is involved, the per diem allowance shall be calculated using the highest of the M&IE rates prescribed for the location where official business is performed.

Deductions in M&IE Allowances: When meals are furnished by the Government without cost, deductions shall be made to the M&IE portion of the per diem rate per the table rates in FTR.

Continental breakfast offered by hotels need not be deducted. Remaining \$7 is allocated for incidental expenses, including tips for waiters, bellhops, baggage handling, and service personnel in lodging accommodations, and mailing cost associated with payment of Government sponsored charge card billings. Laundry, dry cleaning and pressing may be claimed as a domestic travel expense if:

- (1) Expense was incurred at the temporary duty location; AND
- (2) Traveler must incur a minimum of four consecutive nights lodging on official travel.

Lodging Occupancy Tax Exemptions: Individual travelers who incur lodging occupancy taxes are exempt from paying these taxes only when the State or local taxing authority provides a specific exemption to Federal Employees on official travel. Properly completed exemption certificates and satisfactory credentials must be presented to the hotel/motel clerk at time of registration. Travelers are cautioned not to use 'make shift' or standard forms or to claim exemptions to which they are not entitled. All taxes on lodging obtained in **NON-FOREIGN** areas will be claimed as a miscellaneous expense on the travel voucher.

Telephone Calls: Official telephone calls are permitted and one personal telephone call home per day (when traveling more than one night). Reimbursement for actual call expenses for each night's lodging is limited to an average of \$5 per day aggregate for domestic travel and \$15 per day aggregate for foreign travel. Phone access fees charged by the hotel are not included in the \$7 per day aggregate. See Bulletin 02-315.

Documentation on the voucher should indicate whether phone calls are business or personal. When a coin box telephone is used, and it is stated on the travel voucher, the employee is required to self-certify that the use of the Government telephone system was not practical and that commercial calls were made in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

Local Travel reimbursement is paid via completion of a form SF1164. Registration fees for attendance at local meetings must be paid with the Government Purchase Card or Convenience Check in the event the vendor does not accept credit cards.

Travel to Temporary Duty Station (TDY): When a Government-owned vehicle (GOV) is available, but the employee chooses to use a privately owned automobile (personal preference), the rate of reimbursement shall be 19 cents per mile. When a GOV is not available, employees who travel by privately owned vehicle (POV) between their homes and TDY point will be allowed mileage at the rate of 51 cents per mile for the miles driven (not to exceed cost of common carrier). The mileage rate for those employees committed or assigned a GOV that choose to use their privately owned automobile is 19 cents. Chapter 14 - Property provides additional information regarding GOV usage.

NOTE: Employees are expected to use the mode of transportation most advantageous to the government, considering both time and cost. Reimbursement will be limited to

the least costly method.

Use of Common Carrier (CC): Must use contract travel management company (GovTrip). Less than first class accommodations must be used for travel on official business. Government contracted travel agents must be used for booking travel. The allowed charge for agent ticketing will be claimed as a separate expense.

When combining personal travel with official travel, a personal credit card must be used for the personal portion of the CC tickets. The administration fee for business/personal combination tickets that must be reissued will be charged to the traveler.

The government encourages employees who travel frequently to participate in various frequent traveler programs offered by airlines, hotels, and car rental vendors. Employees may be reimbursed for the cost to enter certain frequent traveler programs when entering the program is expected to result in savings to the government. Employees may now retain **frequent flyer miles** and other promotional materials obtained incident to official travel for personal use and may use frequent flyer miles to upgrade class of service for air and train accommodations without approval from the agency. See Bulletin 02-302.

City Pairs Program: Travelers must comply with the mandatory provisions of the FTR governing the use of contract airline service between designated city-pairs. Cash is not to be used to circumvent the regulations governing airline city-pair contracts. See P&P 343.4 - Contract Air Service regarding the use of penalty airfare tickets.

ARS employees are required to use cash (includes personal credit cards, checks, travelers checks and currency) to procure all passenger transportation services costing \$10 or less and to pay excess baggage charges costing \$15 or less. Employees are permitted to use cash, in rare instances (without written approval), to procure passenger transportation services when the cost is over \$10.00 but does not exceed \$100.

Taxicabs may be authorized as advantageous to the Government and considered an allowed reimbursable expense in the following circumstances:

1. Travel to and from common carrier terminals; to office on day of departure; and home on day of return for overnight travel. Limousine service usually costs less than taxicabs and should be utilized when available.
2. While on TDY, travel to training or meeting site if necessary (public transportation is first choice if available).
3. In addition to reimbursement of taxi fare, the employee will be allowed reimbursement of tips in the amount of 15%.

Rental Vehicles may be authorized when advantageous to the Government. When renting a vehicle for domestic travel, extra insurance options such as collision damage waiver (CDW) and

personal liability coverage are not reimbursable. When renting a vehicle while on foreign travel, insurance charges will be reimbursed by the Government. If a rental vehicle is used for official business and personal travel, the charges must be prorated accordingly.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Annual Leave in Connection with Temporary Duty: When annual leave is taken in connection with temporary duty assignment, there must be a statement on the travel authorization (AD-202) that shows the time(s) and date(s) that annual leave begins and ends and this leave must be approved by the AD. When annual leave is approved in connection with temporary duty, the approving official must have sufficient information to be certain that the travel was not planned for personal preference. A more detailed justification in memo form to Area Director is required when the number of days is more than 2 official duty days, or the employee is deviating from the authorized itinerary and/or mode of transportation in order to take annual leave.

Government Charge Card Holders: Employees who travel two or more times per year on official business should apply for a government charge card. Government charge card renewals will be sent automatically to each member approximately 15 days before the current card expires. Holders of charge cards are reminded that these cards are only to be used for official business and bills must be paid within 30 days of receipt of billing unless there are discrepancies with the bill and the credit card company has been notified of such discrepancies. Travel vouchers should be completed within 5 working days after travel ends. Each cardholder must notify the card company of his/her personal change of address.

Technician and CAT III Scientist Travel to Meetings: It is NPA policy to disapprove travel costs for technicians and Category III scientists to attend scientific meetings. Exceptions to this policy will be made when travel is for the purpose of obtaining formalized training (submit SF-182) or for certain extenuating circumstances. Authorship will not be accepted as justification for travel. Exceptions require memo of justification to AD for approval.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES OF TRAVEL DOCUMENTS TO AREA OFFICE

Always keep a file copy of paperwork transmitted to ATA for reference should a question arise.

A Travel Authorization must be cut for all official travel when there will be cost reimbursement, even if the travel has already been performed.

The trip purpose, type, and details must be entered in the appropriate fields of the Trip Overview Section of GovTrip. Specific details (such as contributed funds, foreign travel, annual leave, etc.) will be noted here. In the case of conference attendance, the full name of the conference (no acronyms) plus the dates, location and the url for the conference should be included in this section.

Relocation/New Hire Authorizations are cut by the ATA.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES OF APPLICATIONS FOR APPROVAL TO ACCEPT AN OUTSIDE OFFER TO PAY FOR TRAVEL

See P&P 341.2, Bulletin 00-305, and ethics rules for guidance on acceptance of outside funds for travel. ARS employees are not permitted to solicit outside funding for travel.

Contributed Travel Funding will be limited to meetings or similar functions defined as a conference, seminar, speaking engagement, symposium, training course, or similar event that takes place away from the employee's official station. This term **does not** include a meeting or other event required to carry out an agency's statutory or regulatory functions such as one that is essential to an agency's mission, such as investigations, inspections, audits, site visits, negotiations, or litigations. The term **does not** include promotional vendor training or other meetings held for the primary purpose of marketing the non-Federal source's products or services.

NOTE: To reduce processing time and costs, only funding in excess of \$250 needs to be authorized for acceptance.

Domestic contributed requests must be submitted 30 days before the initial travel date. Foreign travel requires 60 days notice or 45 days notice for contributed foreign travel. If the required notice is not being given, then a through letter requesting a waiver is required. All requests for contributed fund travel should be submitted in the form of a through letter to the Area Director via the Area Travel Assistant to the Area Travel Administrator requesting permission to travel and accept contributed funds. The request letter should include a justification statement, a statement of mutual benefits to be derived, dates of travel, name of contributing organization, and what expenses the contributing organization will provide. The letter of offer from the contributing source (with their complete address and contact information) and the Conflict of Interest forms should also be submitted with the request letter. An acknowledgment letter will be

sent to the contributor from the AD; it is important to make sure the correct addresses (both e-mail and local) of the contributor have been provided.

For an offer to cover travel expenses to be acceptable, the purpose of the travel must be of mutual benefit to the organization offering to pay for the travel and to ARS. If the organization is an agency of the United States government, it is not considered contributed funds travel. If the organization is not an agency of the United States government, travel expenses can be covered in one of three ways:

1. ***In Kind Reimbursement***: The contributing organization furnishes a paid common carrier ticket to the traveler and reimburses the vendor directly for lodging, meals, local transportation costs, and miscellaneous expenses. ARS continues to pay the traveler's salary and the traveler submits an expense account to ARS for any expenses not covered by the outside organization. This is the preferred method.
2. ***Refund Credit to ARS, accounting code initially charged***: The traveler submits travel voucher through the ARS travel system using the Unit accounting code and the cooperator submits a check made payable to USDA-ARS to the Administrative officer at the Location for the amount agreed upon for credit to the ARS accounting code used on the voucher. **No employee may accept funds directly from or by submitting a claim to the cooperator.** Checks made out to employees must be given to the LAO.
3. ***Any contributed travel over 21 days must have Trust Fund Agreement, Reimbursable Cooperative Agreements and Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADA)***: Cooperator establishes an Agreement with ARS and a check for the negotiated amount is deposited into the ARS account in advance of travel. Allow two/three months prior to travel for processing.

In no instance may an ARS employee accept cash directly from a contributing organization nor should the traveler submit an expense account to the outside organization and be reimbursed directly. To do so would be a violation of ethics regulations and the employee would be subject to disciplinary action.

LONG-TERM TDY ALLOWANCES

Advance of Funds may be authorized to cover the first 30 days of TDY **or until** long-term accommodations have been found.

SAMPLE:

First 30 days: Current Per Diem for the TDY (receipt required);
Current Per Diem for the TDY for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE)
(combine the two amounts for a daily total)
M&IE covers such items as meals and tips. Check current per diem rates on the Internet.

Long-Term Accommodations: A reduced fixed daily rate should be established to cover lodging and M&IE expenses for employee only.

- Lodging cost (receipt required) with copy of lease, local telephone charges, TV rental, furniture rental; maid fee, cleaning charges should be prorated over the 30-day period.
- Installation of telephone is not reimbursable by the Government. Monthly telephone charges are reimbursable. Employee is permitted periodic calls home when on US official business of not more than \$5/day.
- Meals – which are reimbursable - should be prorated over the 30-day period.
- Rental car could be permitted. If employee rents car to be used for both official and personal business, the charges must be prorated accordingly. CDW insurance is not reimbursable for US travel.

Other official travel that is performed, while an employee is on long-term TDY, is reimbursed at the regular per diem rate for the location and no meals would be charged against the long-term TDY for those travel days. Only the lodging costs for those travel days would be claimed on the long-term TDY. A separate voucher should be completed for other official travel.

If an employee chooses to return to official station on all weekends while on US official travel, or travel to a vacation site, the travel would be for his personal preference, and expenses would be paid from personal funds; however, an employee is permitted to travel home periodically at Government expense for morale purposes.

FOREIGN TRAVEL

PASSPORTS: When official foreign travel is anticipated for a new hire or a current employee, an official government passport must be requested through the Area Travel Assistant. The ATA completes the AD-121 Passport Request Form and the FASTO form. FASTO (meaning the cable will come from Foreign Agricultural Service [FAS] and go TO the Embassy) will be sent by Headquarters to the American Embassy of each country to be visited.

The Official Passport is not to be given to the traveler until the traveler has country clearance (shown in ARIS). Official passports are authorized for 5 years and the lead time necessary for the renewal process is approximately 6 weeks.

Passport accountability must also be shown in ARIS; the traveler must return the official passport to the retaining office within 5 working days of completion of travel.

Foreign travel documents must be received in the Area Office at least 90 days in advance of travel if traveler does not have an official passport; 60 days if the official passport is valid.

FOREIGN TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS

Initiation of a foreign travel request is accomplished by entering the travel information into the FTIS area in ARIS, which is released to the Area level. If contributed funds are an issue, follow the guidelines in this chapter. When travel is approved by the AD, the ATA will send an e-mail requesting the required forms and documentation needed for travel to that country.

Annual leave while on official foreign travel is limited to 3-5 days. A request for annual leave must be submitted with the original request for authorization to travel.

Vaccinations for Overseas Travel: If a medical exam/inoculation is necessary for travel, it is the traveler's responsibility to determine the required inoculation shots required to enter the country(ies) to be visited. See the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Traveler's Health website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>. The traveler may obtain the required inoculation(s) and receive reimbursement for same. Traveler must carry the inoculation card showing proof of inoculation while in travel status at all times.

Use of US Air Carriers for foreign travel - If travel is funded by ARS, traveler MUST use US air carriers. Signed justification statement must accompany the AD-616 Travel Voucher if foreign carrier is used stating that no US carriers are available to travel from anywhere in USA to a foreign country. In-country use of foreign carriers does not require a justification statement.

It is the responsibility of the traveler to check all documents before leaving duty station to be sure papers are in order and dates are correct on all paperwork.

NOTE: ARS will not grant official time or pay expenses when foreign travel is deemed of no real benefit to ARS or is considered counter-productive. Employees are strongly

warned that attending and participating in foreign meetings as a representative of ARS 'on their own time and expense' could result in disciplinary action.

FOREIGN TRAVEL VOUCHERS

Room taxes have **not** been removed from foreign travel rates so separate claims for taxes will not be allowed for foreign travel. These taxes should be included with the room charges on the per diem line of the Travel Voucher.

Laundry and dry cleaning are part of the incidental portion of the per diem rate and may **not** be claimed as a separate expense.

When the travel voucher is completed, a foreign trip report must be entered into ARIS to close the travel file. Actual cost of travel is shown on this report.